

Mew Gull

Record Number: 94-48

11 Dec 1994

Classification: A-D

Red Rock Res., Marion Co., IA

*S.Dinsmore, *Sinclair, *Cummins, *Kent

IBL 65:42,49,82;Dinsmore & Sinclair 1995

DOCUMENTATIONS

Stephen J. Dinsmore, 11, 17 Dec, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames 50014 [6/26/95*]

Jim Sinclair, 11 Dec, 810 N B St., Indianola

Ray Cummins, 21 Dec, 609 S. Main St., Centerville

Thomas H. Kent, 1 Jan 1995, 211 Richards St., Iowa City 52246

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 65:42, 49

Records Committee: IBL 65:82

Dinsmore, S. J., and J. Sinclair. 1995. Another Mew Gull at Red Rock Reservoir. Iowa Bird Life 65:104-105.

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, I trust Steve doesn't really mean that he wrote field notes "just prior to observation"!

A-D, Description eliminates closest contenders, especially Ring-billed Gull.

regular late fall migrant in Iowa. Records in the upper Midwest are on the increase, and at least a couple are found each year around the Great Lakes.

LITERATURE CITED

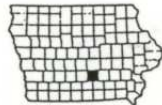
- Grant, P. J. 1986. Gulls: A guide to identification. Buteo Books, Vermillion, South Dakota. 352 pp.
Johnson, A. 1995. Mew Gull at Red Rock Reservoir. *Iowa Bird Life* 65: 53-55.
Kent, T. H. 1983. Mew Gull at Lock and Dam 14. *Iowa Bird Life* 53: 45-46.
Tove, M. H. 1993. Field separation of Ring-billed, Mew, Common, and Kamchatka gulls. *Birding* 25: 386-401.

4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014

✓ ANOTHER MEW GULL AT RED ROCK RESERVOIR

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE AND JIM SINCLAIR

At 7 a.m. on 11 December 1994, Dinsmore arrived below the dam of Red Rock Reservoir in Marion County. At 7:20 a.m., he noticed a smaller gull that was similar to the first-basic Ring-billed Gulls. The bird was roughly the size of a Ring-billed Gull with an overall dark coloration. The bird had a dainty appearance, an entirely dark uppertail, and looked small-billed and large-eyed. He concluded the bird was a first-basic Mew Gull of the nominate North American race *brachyrhynchus*. Jim Sinclair arrived shortly and we studied the bird until 8:30 a.m.



The following is a description of the bird. It was slightly smaller than a Ring-billed Gull, and appeared slimmer-winged in flight. The mantle was dark gray with some brown mottling. The wing coverts were dark brown and the primaries were black. Mantle color was a shade darker than that of an adult Ring-billed Gull. The collar and crown were washed with brown. The forehead and throat were white. The remainder of underparts were washed with pale brown (darkest across belly). The vent was pale and mottled with dark brown. The legs were dull pink. The head was dainty and dove-like, perhaps accentuated by the round forehead and small bill. The eye was dark and appeared large compared to that of a Ring-billed Gull. The bill was very short, thin, and bicolored: distal half dark, becoming pale pink near base. The wingtips extended well beyond the tail tip when perched. Upperwing pattern was as follows: outer primaries and their coverts blackish, inner primary coverts dark with a paler "window" on inner primaries, tips of inner primaries dark, secondary coverts pale brown and lighter than primary coverts, tips of secondaries dark brown, forming a dark bar along trailing edge of wing. The rump was pale brown with darker barring. The upper surfaces of the rectrices were entirely dark brown. The flight of this bird was much more buoyant than that of a Ring-billed Gull. Based on these features, we aged the bird as first-basic. The tail and wing patterns, generally darker coloration, large eye, and smaller bill all eliminate first-basic Ring-billed Gull. Identification to subspecies was based on tail pattern and more extensive dark color on head and underparts.

The bird was reportedly present through 1 January 1995, although we looked for but did not observe the bird after 17 December 1994. This represents the fourth

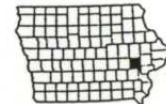
record of a Mew Gull in Iowa. All of the birds have occurred in December, suggesting this species may be overlooked as a late fall migrant in the state. First-basic birds should occur as often as adults, but may be overlooked because of their similarity to first-basic Ring-billed Gulls.

4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50014, and 810 North B St., Indianola, IA 50125

PRAIRIE WARBLERS NESTING IN JOHNSON COUNTY

CHRIS EDWARDS

On the morning of 8 July 1995 at Lake Macbride State Park in Johnson County I saw a pair of adult Prairie Warblers feeding four recently-fledged young. The habitat was a large brushy hillside with many shrubs and small deciduous trees. I had previously seen an adult male Prairie Warbler at this location on 17 May 1995 and 5 June 1995. The male and at least one juvenile were still present on 15 July 1995 but were not found on subsequent visits.



The male was easily recognized by its bright yellow face and underparts, black eye stripe, mustachial stripe, and streaked sides, and chestnut streaks on an olive-green back. The female was slightly duller colored with gray facial stripes and streaks on its sides, and fainter chestnut streaking on the back. The juveniles had a light gray head and throat, and an olive-green back. The breast and upper belly were light yellow fading to white on the lower belly, with a few faint gray streaks on the sides. The upper side of the wings and tail were gray, and the underside of the tail was white with narrow black edging. The juveniles appeared to be the same size as the adults.

I observed the adults and young interacting for 90 minutes. While the fledglings awkwardly hopped among the branches of small shrubs and occasionally flew short distances, the adults made frequent feeding trips and rested only briefly. The male foraged primarily in trees and shrubs while the female most often foraged near the ground. They occasionally hovered and gleaned insects from the tips of branches. Several types of insects, including green caterpillars, were fed to the young. The juveniles gave continual sharp call notes which became louder and more frequent as the adults approached with food.

The male sang a typical ascending buzzy "zee-zee-zee" song infrequently, and on two occasions was heard singing other songs. On 17 May it repeatedly sang "witchety-witchety-witchety" similar to a Common Yellowthroat. On 15 July it repeatedly sang a high, thin song similar to an American Redstart. Both Common Yellowthroats and American Redstarts were present at the location. On one occasion the male was seen chasing a Blue-winged Warbler.

This is the first confirmed nesting of Prairie Warbler in Iowa, but there is a record of a nest with eggs found in Lee County on 5 June 1886 (P. A. DuMont, *Wilson Bulletin* 47:205-208, 1935) which was judged as probable by the Records Committee. The Prairie Warbler is a rare summer resident in the state. There are a few unconfirmed reports prior to 1977, but it has been reported in all except two years since then, mostly from Lee, Johnson, and Allamakee counties. Iowa is at the western edge of the Prairie Warbler's summer range. Thanks to Tom Kent for his help with this note.

85 Whitman Avenue, North Liberty, IA 52317

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DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Mew Gull (L. c. brachyrhynchus)

Number: 1 first-winter

Location: below Red Rock Reservoir dam, Marion Co., IA

Habitat: spillway

Date: 11 December 1994 (also 17 December)

Time: 7:20-8:30 a.m.

Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014

Others who saw bird: Jim Sinclair, m.ob.

Description of bird(s): I arrived at the spillway at 7 a.m. and began scanning the hundreds of gulls that were present. Shortly, one gull caught my attention as it flew by at a distance on less than 50 feet. The bird was roughly Ring-billed Gull size with an overall dark coloration. However, the bird had a dainty appearance, an entirely dark uppertail, and looked small-billed and large-eyed. I concluded the bird was a first-winter Mew Gull of the nominate North American race brachyrhynchus. Jim Sinclair arrived shortly and we studied the bird until 8:30 a.m.

The following is a description of the bird. It was slightly smaller than a Ring-billed Gull, and appeared slimmer-winged in flight. Mantle dark gray with some browner mottling, wing coverts dark brown, primaries blackish. Mantle color was a shade darker than that of an adult Ring-billed Gull. Collar and crown washed with brown. Forehead and throat white. Remainder of underparts washed with pale brown (darkest across belly). Appeared pale-headed when perched. Vent pale, mottled with dark brown. Legs dull pink. Head dainty and dove-like, perhaps accentuated by the round forehead and small bill. Eye dark and appeared large when compared to that of a Ring-billed Gull. Bill very short, thin, and bicolored-distal half dark, becoming pale pink near base (poor distinction between colors). Wingtips extended well beyond tail tip when perched. Upperwing pattern as follows: outer primaries and their coverts blackish, inner primary coverts dark with a paler "window" on inner primaries, tips of inner primaries dark, secondary coverts pale brown and lighter than primary coverts, tips of secondaries dark brown, forming a dark bar along trailing edge of wing. Rump pale brown and barred with dark brown. Upper surface of rectrices entirely dark brown (didn't notice the narrow white tips said to be present in some references). Flight of this bird much more buoyant than that of a Ring-billed Gull. Based on these features, I aged the bird as first-winter.

Similar species and how eliminated: The only species with which this bird could be confused is Ring-billed Gull. The tail and wing patterns, generally darker coloration, large eye, and smaller bill all eliminate first-winter Ring-billed Gull. Identification to subspecies was based on tail pattern and more extensive dark color on head and underparts.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were very good with partly cloudy skies. Estimated viewing distance was as close as 50 feet. I used 8x40 binoculars and a 20-60x spotting scope.

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Previous experience with species: I have seen one other Mew Gull (an adult) in Iowa. I saw several hundred in early December 1994 in central California. I have also seen two of the European race L. c. canus, one each in MA and NC.

References consulted: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America
 Grant Gulls: A guide to identification

How long before field notes made: written just prior to observation

How long before this form completed: written 19 December 1994

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

94-48

What species? Mew Gull How many? 1

Location? below dam at Red Rock

Type of Habitat? _____

When? date(s): 12/11/94 time: 7:30 to 8:30

Who? your name and address: Jim Sinclair, 210 N. E. St, Indianola

Others with you: Steve Dinsmore

Others before or after you: Jim Fuller

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

A slightly smaller bird than the Ring-billed Gulls with which it was compared. Head had a delicate π 2 - rounded, large, dark eye and small bi-colored bill. Head, wings and rump a mottled gray brown, back a light medium gray. Very broad, dark tail band with no visible ^{terminal} ~~band~~ band.

Similar species: how eliminated:

Smaller with somewhat of a stubby appearance than Ring-billed Gull with which it was compared.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? no
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment.

Viewing conditions very good, bird seen both flying and sitting up to as close as 30 yds viewed with glasses and scope.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

none

References and persons consulted before writing description:

Brief look at N. G. S Field Guide

How long before field notes made? 1 hour - this form completed? 24 hours

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).

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BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

Species: Mew Gull (first-winter) Number: 1

Location: Redrock Reservoir, Marion Co.

Observer: Ray Cummins 609 S. Main Street Centerville, IA.

Others before/with/after: Tin Schantz

Date: 12/21/94 Time Bird Seen: 10:30AM to 11:05AM

Habitant & circumstances: Located on an ice shelf above the dam where about 2000 gulls mostly Ring-billed were setting. It took about an hour to locate, but the task was made somewhat easier because only about twenty of the Ring-billed gull were in first winter plumage. The bird was setting alone on the left edge of the group when located.

Description: The bird was slightly small than the smallest ring-billed gulls. The bill was shorter and had no blobuous tip like the ring-billed gulls. The bill had a light base, but the distal 2/3rds was black unlike any of the first winter ring-billed gull where the distal 1/3rd or less was black. The back was the gray with brownish wings. The back had three black blotches on the gray lower back which seemed to be somewhat distinctive compared to the first-winter ring-billeds. The wing coverts contrasted with the black primaries on the standing gull. The wing extension beyond the tail was the same as ring-billeds. The breast was mottled with gray-brown, but didn't seem to be quite as heavy as the ring-billeds. The legs were grayish and you could see leg above the knee, many ring-billeds had no leg above the knee. The tail was not seen on the 21st, but on a sighting on the 31st I could see the tail several times as the gull moved its wings and it did have a thicker tail band than any of the first winter ring-billeds. I never saw the bird in flight.

Description of voice: N/H.

Similarly appearing species: see first-winter ring-billed comparisons above.

Distance (how measured): estimated 150yds on the 21st and 50-75yds below the dam on the 31st.

Optical equipment: Kowa 20x to 60x Spotting Scope.

Light: sunny excellent light both days.

Previous experience with species: Have seen several in the western U.S.

Anyone have reservations?: no.

Books and references: none

Time of field notes: during sighting Final typing: 16 days

Signature: Raymond D. Cummins Address: 609 S. Main St.

Date: 01-14-94

Centerville, Ia. 52544

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DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

Species: Mew Gull; *Number:* 1 first-winter

Location: Red Rock Res., Marion Co., IA

Date: 1 Jan 1995; *Time:* 9:45 to 10:00 a.m.

Name and address: Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246.

Others before/with/after: had been seen by many

Habitat and circumstances: below dam on sand bar

Description of bird: I picked this bird out as it rested among Herring and Ring-billed Gulls because of its size.

Otherwise, it looked much like a first-winter Ring-billed. It was clearly an order smaller than adult and first-winter Ring-billed Gulls. The bill was also shorter and thinner with a curve at the tip of the upper mandible. The bill had a black tip producing a dipped in ink effect. The mantle was gray and the wings were brown. I did not see the tail well. The birds flushed when I was not looking at this bird and I could not relocate it.

Similar species: see above.

Any one have reservations?: not that I know of.

Light: behind me; *Distance:* 30 yards; *Optics:* 20x scope

Previous experience: saw Iowa's first -- a 2nd year bird, also many in California and Alaska

References before/after viewing: looked at field guide while viewing

Time of notes: while viewing; *Final typing:* 7 weeks